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UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

THE CLASSICAL PROSODY HERESY

IN

ELIZABETHAN POETIC CRITICISM

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty

Of the Graduate School of the University of Louisville

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Of Master of Arts

Department of English

By

John Hicks

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The
Preface

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PREFACE

I came across the Classical Prosody Heresy first when I attempted to find out what or who was the Areopagus Club. From this investigation I found myself in the Spenser-Harvey letters, and then the whole movement for classical prosody came vaguely into view. It is not a simple matter to state exactly what the movement was or what it aimed at, more than to say that it was one bit of the endless chain of convention and revolt by which poetry is led higher and higher into artistic accomplishment. That it did not accomplish a great deal is beside the point. Poetry of the pre-Elizabethan days had sunk to a low level; that the reformers saw anything that might raise it to a higher, was an important fact. The waves of critical interest swept over the poetic shores; whether they were to leave little or much when they ebbed, they had at least stirred the sands. A new life and interest were created.

"The inevitable extremes are merely insurgency's alms for oblivion." Surely the Classical

Prosody Heresy has received its share of oblivion, as it had its portion of extreme ideas. With limited facilities, I have found very little written about the movement; from that little, though, I have made something of an attempt to unite the various aspects of the theorists' views. I must acknowledge that without Mr. Gregory Smith's collection of "Elizabethan Critical Essays", the present study would have been impossible.

I

**Decadent State
of Poetry**

CLASSICAL PROSODY HERESY
IN
ELIZABETHAN POETIC CRITICISM

Decadent State of Poetry

I

Bearing in mind the vast extent of the poetic and dramatic writing in the age of Elizabeth, one seeking contemporary poetic studies or criticisms may be quite surprised at what one finds. The literary evidence consists to a large extent of Defences, Apologies, Introductions, Prefaces, Dedications, and published letters; much of the existing criticism is incidental to the study or discussion of other questions. Almost all, including the treatises primarily devoted to poetic study, show a spirit of uncertainty, of groping for some definite basis of facts or principles. English poetry, to the essayists, is consciously in an experimental stage, and at a vital point of change. What they seek is the direction in which poetry must proceed, to reach its highest perfection in the English tongue.

If the uncertainty and the apparent paucity of material is surprising, one should look back a few decades, and discover, if possible, the cause. Wyatt and his disciple, the Earl of Surrey, introduced their revolutionary imitations of the popular Italian poets, especially Petrarch, no earlier than the first half of the Sixteenth Century. Previous to their innovations, the field of English poetry had been dominated by two equally insufficient and undesirable schools. One was the old Chaucerian school, with its now hackneyed imitations of Chaucer, especially of the Roman de la Rose. Chaucer was recognized -- and justly so -- as a momentous figure in English poetry; but this fact was no sufficient excuse for his train of followers. In fact, the mode had almost worn itself out. The other school was that of the popular, unpoetic doggerel, which Schelling describes as "hobbling its lame dog-trot, but deaf to those finer qualities of the soul of poetry, which alone are capable of preserving a national literature."¹

1. Schelling, P. Poetic and Verse Criticism of the Reign of Elizabeth: Philadelphia, 1891. p. 4.

In contact with the prevailing poetry of his day, as well as under the Italian influence, Wyatt -- not surprisingly -- did not produce the highest type of poetry. Surrey, following him, shows a vast improvement, though not always a complete mastery. From Tottel's Miscellany, published 1557, we can see that there were soon a number of followers in the use of the Italian forms, especially the sonnet. Yet one must note the date of publication of the volume, and then recall that Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1558, reigning until 1603. Not much over twenty years since the first verse from Wyatt's pen!

If the recentness of the Italian innovations is not sufficient to account for an uncertainty of opinion among those who were concerned with poetry as an art, then another influence may be cited. With the Renaissance there came into England a renewed interest in the classics. Aristotle, Homer, Virgil, Euripides and the rest of the ancient writers -- these were consulted with renewed interest and somewhat of reverence. It is not surprising that those most concerned with them should have conceived the idea of applying their dicta to contemporary poetry -- even of adopting into English poetry, either bodily or with modifications, the classical

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methods of versification. "But yet, bicause the
prouidence of God hath left vnto vs in no other
tong saue onlie the Greke and Latin tong, the trewe
preceptes and perfite examples of eloquence, there-
fore must we seeke in the Authors onelie of those
two tonges the trewe Paterne of Eloquence."¹

In the face of such conditions as these we have
just noted, one studying the body of critical essays
of the period should wonder that they could reach as
high a quality as they did. "When all has been said,
the age that admitted the 'lolloping amble' of the
'Poulter's Measure' as its most usual metre, and the
age that loved the monotonous Alexandrine . . . was, at
the least, an age only in process of growth as to the
conception of poetic form, with much before it, as yet
to learn."²

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1. Roger Ascham, The Scholemaster (Bk. II) 1570; in
G. Smith's Elizabethan Critical Essays. p. 22.
 2. F. Schelling, op. cit. p. 4.

II

Puritan Attack

and

Critical Defense

Puritan Attack and Critical Defense

II

To the Puritan attack upon poetry probably goes the highest credit for the production of genuine criticism. In conjunction with the theater, poetry was denounced as 'idle', 'vain', 'mischievous exercise', and highly immoral; moreover, it was looked upon with disapproval by 'ancient Writers'. "The Puritan arguments fall into two main groups -- the historical and the moral."¹ On the historical side, certain Church Fathers and classical philosophers were quoted whenever their words could be construed as in condemnation. Particularly prevalent was the mention of Plato's exclusion of poets from his ideal Republic.

Naturally, in the face of such an attack, the apologists for poetry adopted the methods of their adversaries, and defended poetry by citing other ancient writers, or by turning to their own use writers who the Puritans had said were opposed to it.

1. G. Smith, op. cit., Introduction: p. xv.

"Though Plato could wish the expulsion of Poets from his well publiques, which he might doe with reason, yet the wisest had not all that same opinion."¹ One readily notices that in their essays, the defendants are continually borrowing from each other, as well as from outside sources. All sound very much alike in their "obvious retort of counting the votes on the other side."² However, in most of them there is the feeling that poetry as a kind does not need any defence. As Harrington states, "My cause I count so good, and the evidence so open, that I neither neede to vse the countenance of any great state to boulster it, nor the cunning of any little lawyers to enforce it."³

On the question of morality, the dispute over poetry was more pointed, though the two parties stood on entirely different grounds. The Puritans based their attacks upon the immorality of the "playhouse and its associates", and the "foreign, especially the Italian, influences in Society."⁴

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1. Thos. Lodge, A Defence of Poetry; 1579: in G. Smith, op. cit., I, 57.
 2. G. Smith, op. cit., I, Intro. p. xxii.
 3. Sir J. Harrington, A Preface, or rather a Briefe Apologie of Poetrie; G. Smith, op. cit., I, 196.
 4. G. Smith, op. cit., Introduction: p. xvi.

Little of specific charges or evidence having a literary bearing, was presented. Most of the apologists, though naturally resenting the confusion of such vices with the quality of the drama and poetry, were nevertheless ready to join in condemning the evils of the theater and of poetry. Likewise, they made common cause in attacking the baleful influence of things Italianate. The really valuable result of the controversy was that it caused lovers of the highest type of poetry to examine critically their own ranks, to condemn that which was amiss, to present in definite form the values of true poetry, and to seek after the best means of raising English poetry to a standard comparable with the classics. "Poesie therefore may be an Art in our vulgar, and that verie methodicall and commendable."¹

As far as poetic criticism is concerned, the really valuable aspect of the controversy is the defence of the apologists based upon the body of the poetry itself. Let us review some of the points of their discussion,² as Gregory Smith presents it.

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1. Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie. in G. Smith, op. cit., II, 8.
 2. Op. cit. Intro., pp. xxiii-xxxi.

First, "Poetry is of divine origin." "Who then doothe not wonder at Poetry? who thinketh not that it procedeth from aboue?"¹ Poets "came by instinct diuine and by deep meditation, and much abstinence . . . to be made apt to receaue visions, both waking and sleeping, which made them vtter prophesies and foretell things to come."² Second, "Poetry is an art of imitation, and not a mere empiric of sound and form or the refashioning of traditional material."³

Third, The moral aspect of poetry was one of the main points of attack by the Puritans. While the apologists do not make it a major point, they do affirm its moral value. "Dit you never reade . . . that vnder the persons of beastes many abuses were dissiphered? Have you not reason to waye that whatsoeuer ether Virgil did write of his gnatt or Ouid of his fley was all couertly to declare abuse?"⁴ It will be noticed that in treatment of the moral value of Poetry, the essayists often have in mind the particular type, the allegory, which can most easily be used to present

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1. Thos. Lodge, A Defence of Poetry; in G. Smith, op. cit., I, 70.
 2. Pattenham, The Arte of English Poesie, 1589; in G. Smith, op. cit., II, 7.
 3. T. Lodge, op. cit., II, 70.
 4. T. Lodge, op. cit., I, 65.

teachings and precepts - with sugar-coating. However, this view is not generally considered to be of the highest value.

Fourth, while not going so far as to omit the usefulness of poetry, the essayists are anxious to place a noticeable emphasis upon its capacity for giving pleasure. "The perfect perfection of poetry is this, to mingle delight with profit in such wise that a reader might by his reading be partaker of both."¹ "Though they did not go quite so far as to separate the dulce from the utile, they appeared to give a primary importance to the former."²

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1. Wm. Webbe, A Discourse of English Poetrie. 1586, in G. Smith, op. cit., I, 250.
 2. G. Smith, op. cit., Intro., p. xxvi.

III

**The Growth of the
Reform Movement**

The Growth of The Reform Movement

III

Thus far we have noticed more especially the essayists' concern with the defense of poetry. Keeping all these facts in mind, let us turn now to a definite problem of technique which only indirectly grew out of the Puritan attack and the defense. In the face of bitter criticism, poets and scholars naturally turned to an examination of their own poetry; in seeking to defend it against all attack, they were brought to notice those points in which their contemporary verse showed a deficiency. Under self-criticism, many of the writers came to see that various faults existed in their work -- technical faults for which they might hope to find a remedy. In this state of mind it was that certain individuals discovered what they must have thought to be the salvation of English poetry: classical prosody.

Primarily because of internal strife, England had not felt the influence of the Renaissance at the time Italy did. It was in the latter part of the Fifteenth Century under Henry VII that the new interest began to

be strongly felt. Such men as Grocyn, Lynacer, More, and Colet received the Humanistic influence; it spread rapidly. Familiarity with the classical writers and their works grew; it became what one might almost term a fad. Evidence of this fact is seen in the readiness with which Elizabethan writers borrowed from each other various classical allusions. In view of the knowledge of -- indeed the reverence for -- the classics, it was not so strange that some individuals, seeking a means of raising the quality of contemporary poetry, should have seen as their God-send the prosodic methods of these same classical writers.

The movement for a classical prosody took on a rather definite form as early as 1570, when Roger Ascham in The Scholemaster makes certain suggestions as to its use: "And although Carmen Exametrum doth rather trotte and hoble than runne smothly in our English tong, yet I am sure our English tong will receive carmen Iambicum as naturallie as either Greke of Latin."¹ Continually, from that time to the turn of the century, the matter finds mention in one form or another, either at length or as an incidental observation, in nearly all the

1. Op. cit., I, 31.

poetic discussions. Various writers deal with various phases of the movement; some take one stand, some another. Hardly any two wholly agree on the steps to be taken, or the degree to which the revision according to classical models should go.

One can hardly refrain from a comparison of the effort toward classical prosody with the contemporary Imagist movement. Both had a remarkably short life; the classical movement had run its course in not more than about thirty years. Likewise, it spent its energy for the most part in theorizing, producing only a small body of works, each has had its greatest results in its influence for greater freedom on the main body of poetry. Each, even, may facetiously be said to have "talked itself to death."

Of necessity, the effort to adopt classical verse could not confine itself to the mere application of the feet and the verse forms themselves in English. While this was the primary consideration, various other difficulties immediately arose. One was, naturally, that the majority of writers of the day would oppose a change of any kind, finding the existing methods sufficient to their wants. A more formidable obstacle, though, was the nature of the English itself. No one -- unless it were Archbishop Drant, none of whose precepts

We have in writing -- considered it possible to adopt bodily the quantitative method of poetry. "For both the concourse of our monasillables make our verses vnapt to slide, and also, if we examine our polysillables, we shall find few of them, by reason of their heavinesse, willing to serue in place of a Dactile."¹

Certain allowances, certain modifications of the rules were imperative if the English language were to be made agreeable to the old forms. A matter of chief concern and of much discussion, then, was that of orthography. "I am of the Opinion there is no one more regular and iustifiable direction, eyther for the assured and infallible Certaintie of our English Artificiall Prosodye particularly, . . . than first of all vniuersally to agree upon ONE AND THE SAME ORTHOGRAPHIE, in all points conformable and proportionate to one COMMON NATURAL PROSODYE."² If there is any doubt of the seriousness of this matter to them, it should be dispelled by a glance at the poetic writings of the day; a definite and regularly observed orthography was a thing unknown. And when

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1. Campion, T., Observations in the Arte of Eng. Poesie, op. cit., II, 333.
 2. Harvey, G., Letters in op. cit., I, 102.

one considers what have a varying and uncertain spelling would wreak upon versification by quantity, one must realize the earnestness with which regularity was desired. Several writers, indeed, devote themselves to a detailed account of the values to be attributed to each letter in its various positions, hoping thereby to afford a basis on which uniformity could be established, and a metrical prosody assured.

Like many movements of similar nature, that for adoption of classical prosody did not content itself with setting forward a new method of poetic technique. It must needs strengthen itself by attacking the existing order of verse, and especially the outstanding feature, which was rime. Time after time some passing thrust or some direct attack was aimed at the "Barbarous and Balductum Rymes." Some opponents go even so far as to imply that the existence of true poetry itself depended upon the total abolishment of rime. But rime, too, had its adherents, and did not go undefended. "I am not ignorant that whatsoever shall by way of reprehension examine the imperfections of Rime must encounter with many glorious enemies, and those very expert and ready at their weapons."¹

1. Campion, Op. cit., II, 330.

IV

The Attack on Rime

The Attack on Rime

IV

Such, then, are the general features of a singular poetic movement, which we wish now to consider in greater detail. Of a very short life, it was nevertheless a matter of intense interest to those who took a direct part in it. Not of the least interest is the final skirmish, with which the whole movement fell through; the attack upon rimed verse by Campion, famous for his rimed poetry, and the able counter by Daniel, which effectually closed the matter.

In order to see in a true light the emphasis which was placed upon the question of abolishing rime, it will be of value to examine the essays and to bring forward what evidence can be found. We have noticed in passing that as early as 1570 Ascham had made some suggestions concerning the movement, in his Scholemaster. In speaking of the need for imitation of the best models in writing, he takes occasion to observe: " . they wished . . . that we Englishmen likewise would acknowledge and understand rightfully our rude begarly ryming, brought first into Italie

by Gothes and Hunnes, whan all good verse and all good learning were destroyed by them, and after caryed into France and Germanie, and at last receyued into England by men of excellent wit in deede, but of small learning and lesse iudgement in that behalf.¹

It is interesting to note this reference which is made to the coming of rime into English poetry. The same anecdote recurs quite often in the discussions of later writers on the subject. "But, if such good wittes and forward diligence had bene directed to follow the best examples, and not haue bene caryed by tyme and custome to content themselves with that barbarous and rude Ryming, emonges their other worthy praises, which they haue iustly deseryed, this had not bene the least, to be counted emonges men of learning and skill more like unto the Grecians than vnto the Gothians in handling of their verse."²

Possibly realizing that many would be opposed to giving over rime, and would condemn the move to change the style of poetry, Ascham defends his position in advance: ". such that defend it (rime) do so, either for lacke of knowledge what is best, or

1. Ascham, op. cit., I, 29.
2. Ascham, op. cit., I, 30.

els of verie enuie that any should performe that in learning, whereunto they, as I sayd before, either for ignorance can not, or for idleness will not, labor to attaine vnto.¹ Ascham was, of course, greatly influenced by the classicism and Humanism of the Renaissance; and it is not surprising that the Greek and Latin methods should have found preference with him over the 'vulgar' or riming poetry.

We noted before the recurrence of the allusion to the story of the coming of rime into poetry at the time of the ravages of the Goths and Huns; another of the popular anecdotes is also given by Ascham. It is that of the first appearance of rime in Greek verse. The perpetrator of the offense, it seems, was one Simmias Rhodius, who related in verse the story of Jupiter's courting of Leda in the guise of a swan. The innovation of rime was so unpopular that both the poet and his verse were condemned, and the Greek rimeless poetry was saved for posterity, not to be violated until the barbarians again introduced rime. The reference to Simmias Rhodius occurs frequently as an argument against riming verse, as we shall notice.

1. Ascham, op. cit., I, 31.

It is a matter of surprise to find Spenser aligning himself against rime. There is some question as to the absolute sincerity of his conversion; yet in his letter to Harvey he states that the University group with which he allied himself had decided upon a "generall surceasing and silence of balde Rymers, and also of the verie best to."¹ For further evidence, we find in the letters a discussion of the whole matter of quantitative verse for English poetry, some of his own efforts in that style, and this statement: "But I am, of late, more in loue wyth my Englishe Ver-sifying than with Ryming; whyche I should haue done long since, if I would haue followed your counsell."² Still it is hard to believe that this was a move seriously contemplated, for all the while he was working in his accustomed style. Possibly it was to him a matter containing possibilities.

Gabriel Harvey, on the other hand, seemed quite convinced of the necessity of abolishing rime altogether. He is thankful for the aid of Sidney and Dyer, who also were helping "forwarde our new famous enterprise for

1. Spenser, E., Letters, op. cit., I, 89.
 2. Spenser. ibid., p. 89.

Exchanging of Barbarous and Balductum Rymes with Artificial Verses, the one being in manner of pure and fine Goulde, the other but counterfet and base ylfauoured Copper."¹ Here is retold the story of "Simmas Rhesius, the folishe idle phantasticall poett that first deuised this odd riminge with many other triflinge and childishe toyes to make verse."²

Sir Philip Sidney in his Defense takes occasion to mention rime, but he does not take sides for or against it. Of rime and quantitative verse "whether of these be the most excellent, would beare many speeches . . . there being in eyther sweetnes, and wanting in neither maiestie."³

By the time William Webbe wrote his Discourse the question must have attained to some prominence. Webbe takes up in this manner: the matter of "this tinkerly verse which we call ryme: which rude kinde of verse, though (as I touched before) it rather discrediteth our speeche, as borrowed from the Barbarians, then furnisheth the same with any comely ornament, yet being so ingrafted by custome, and frequented by the

1. Harvey, op. cit., I, 101.

2. Ibid., p. 126.

3. Sidney, Sir P., The Defense of Poesie in op. cit., I, 204.

most parte, I may not utterly disallowe it, least I should seeme to call in question the iudgement of all our famous wryters."¹ He, also, mentions the story of "Symias Rhodius" and that of the ascendance of rime with the Huns and Goths. Though he opposes rime, he does not hesitate to give rules for it.

In George Puttenham's work we find one of the first direct defenses of rime. He argues that even before Greek and Latin poetry, was that of the Hebrews and the Chaldeans, which used "the same maner of rime, as hath bene of late obserued by learned men. Whereby it appeareth that our vulgar running Poesie was common to all nations of the world besides."² Therefore, he thinks its continued use is justified. He too makes suggestions for the use of quantitative verse, but evidently reserves the use of rime too, for he gives a precaution against certain kinds of accent, lest "ye shall seldome or perchance neuer find one to make vp³ rime with him, vnless it be badly and by abuse."

Of course there are a few other writers who could be cited. But by the end of the century, interest in

1. Webbe, op. cit., I, 266.
 2. Puttenham, op. cit., II, 10.
 3. Ibid, p. 119.

the issue was almost dead. The preface to the "Reader" of the First Booke of the Preservation of King Henry the VII published in 1599 was merely a belated entry in the lists. For this reason, if for no other, the final act of the struggle is of extreme interest.

Thomas Campion was one of the most successful and popular writers of songs and conventional poetry in that day. It was remarkable that, in the face of his own popularity, he should have turned to an attack on rime. But that he should have done so after the whole matter had passed from the minds of most, was doubly novel. He, in his argument, cites the story of the Huns and Goths, and proposes that the "illusage" of rime "be abolisht". "For this end have I studyed to induce a true forme of versefying into our language: for the vulgar and vnartificiall custome of riming hath, I know, deterr'd many excellent wits from the exercise of English poesy."

Among his other objections to rime are: that it is "sparingly to be used, least it offend the eare

1. Campion, op. cit., II, 327.

with tedious affection;¹ that it brings about
 "such a confused inequality of sillables".²
 "But there is yet another fault in Rime altogether
 intollerable, which is, that it inforceth a man
 oftentimes to abjure his matter and extend a short
 conceit beyond all bounds of arte."³ In such
 manner Campion makes his attack on rime, proposing
 at the same time a system of verse by classical
 rules.

Samuel Daniel was not long in answering Campion.
 He had believed rime firmly established in English
 poetry; "but yet now vpon the great discouery of
 these new measures, threatening to ouerthrow the
 whole state of Ryme in this kingdom, I must either
 stand out to defend, or els be forced to forsake my
 selfe and giue ouer all."⁴ He stands out to defend.
 "And for our Ryme . dooth adde more grace, and hath
 more of delight than euer bare numbers, howsoeuer
 they can be forced to runne in our slow language,

1. Ibid, p. 330.

2. Ibid, p. 330.

3. Ibid, p. 331.

4. Daniel, S., A Defense of Ryme in op. cit.,
 II, 357.

can possibly yeeld."¹ In a manner similar to that of Puttenham, he argues for the value of rime from its antiquity, and from its universal appeal to man. In direct refutation of Campion's objection that it caused one to "extend a shorte conceit beyond all bounds of arte", he states: "Ryme is no impediment to his conceit, but rather giues him wings to mount, and carries him, not out of his course, but as it were beyond his power to a farre happier flight."²

Thus we see the manner of Daniel's final and evidently conclusive defense of rime against its opponents. He recognizes some advantage to conventional poetry in the attack: "And let no writer in Ryme be any way discouraged in his endencour by this brave allarum, but rather animated to bring vp all the best of his power. . . and let this make vs looke the better to our feete, the better to our matter, better to our maners."³ But on the whole he considers it unjustifiable, and ably upholds his cause.

Perhaps the outstanding feature of the whole

1. Ibid, p. 360.
 2. Ibid, p. 365.
 3. Ibid, p. 369.

controversy was the position of both Spenser and Campion among those who opposed the practice of ryming. While the stand of Spenser in the matter is sometimes explained away by the supposition that his interest was only superficial or playful, the attack of Campion is evidently sincere and spirited. This fact is taken into account by Daniel when he speaks of Campion as one "whose commendable Rymes, albeit now himself an enemy to ryme, have giuen theretofore to the world the best notice of his worth."¹ Probably he was simply giving himself over to an outburst of abstract theorizing, brought on at a late date by the discussion of other theorists; surely he had put aside all thought of his own excellent practice.

Puttenham and Daniel, the two who definitely assume the role of defenders of rime, take, it seems, the most logical position. Daniel's words should be borne in mind as they seem to summarize the movement as a whole: "these Salies made out of the quarter of our set knowledges are the gallant proffers onely of attemptiue spirits, and

1. Daniel, op. cit., II, 358.

commendable though they worke no other effect
than make a Brauado.¹"

From the beginning of the movement against
rime, to its virtual disappearance after the first
years of the new century, was only a few years.
It was simply the preliminary and protective attack
of a larger movement, and with the fall of that, it,
too, lost its place. To see it in its proper per-
spective we should now turn to the more central pro-
blem of classical prosody as advocated by various
writers, and examine that as closely as we can through
the medium of the essayists who brought it into print.

1. Ibid., p. 359.

v

Classical Prosody

Classical Prosody

V

Having conceived the belief that the faults of English verse of the time were the result of the use of rime, and wishing therefore to be rid of it, the theorists had to propose something as a substitute. Such things as blank verse and vers libre were not then recognized in theory, and since the influence of the classics was so great, it is not unnatural that the reformers of poetry should have conceived the idea of adopting or adapting to English use the prosody of the Greek and Latin. But they also recognized the great difficulty which such a change involved.

Perhaps it would be of benefit just now to review briefly some of the essential elements of classical prosody which should be borne in mind in a discussion of the proposed reforms. As it seems evident that the writers had in mind primarily Latin poetry, it is enough to notice it alone. Of course the first fact to remember is that the poetry of the classics was not based upon a rhythm of accent, as we know it to-day and as was then popular in the rimed verse.

It was rather based upon a musical evaluation of the words, a quantitative time value of each syllable. Long vowels were actually treated as having twice the time value of short ones. Thus, resembling the measure of music, the feet of a verse were in point of time completely equivalent.

This time element was naturally something quite foreign to both the speech and the poetry of the English. A question of the relative values of versification based upon accent and that based upon quantity was raised; and a feeling prevailed that the use of quantitative evaluation of syllables was artificial and did not lend itself to the English language. In a great many cases the use of vowel quantity gave rise to excessive distortion of words from their ordinary pronunciation. We shall find most of the critics dealing with this matter when we study their proposals.

Besides the matter of syllabic quantity, there were prescribed and conventional forms which were to be followed in verse construction. As one of the favorite forms was the dactylic hexameter, we may rightly expect that the advisability of following classical models in the use of the hexameter should be one of the favorite questions of discussion.

Harvey, indeed, has taken his place in literature to a large extent upon the basis of his championing of the hexameter in English poetry.

I have already mentioned in passing that one of the first things necessary to the establishment of quantitative verse in English was a uniform orthography. There was little or no general agreement concerning the spelling of even the common words. Naturally, under such a condition, it would have been highly confusing, if not impossible, to employ a quantitative system of prosody. For with varying spellings of a word, by applying the rule for short and long syllables, different quantities might be obtained for the same syllable, and thus general disorder would ensue and the very idea of a regular versifying would be destroyed. This problem, therefore, received quite a little attention.

The majority of writers seemed to tend toward the view that in order to meet the peculiar character of English words, changes of or a departure from the strict Latin rules might be quite properly allowed. Naturally, this often brought up the discussion of the nature and structure of English words, and their adaptability to the new meters; and it also raised the

more pointed question of whether the necessities of the verse rhythm were sufficient excuse for a distortion of the common accent of a word. The view of the majority on this point is probably represented by this statement of Gascoigne: "And in your verses remembre to place euery worde in his natural Emphasis or sound, that is to say, in such wise, and with such length or shortnesse, eleuation or depression of sillables, as is commonly pronounced or vsed." ¹ Still another point -- and possibly the central one, after all -- was the actual use of classical measures and verse in English poetry; for Latin rules prescribed not only the quantity of words and of feet, but also the proper combination of feet for each type of verse.

These several questions are so inextricably bound up with each other that it would be almost impossible to consider any one of them without going into a discussion of the others. Some writers, of course, dwelt more especially upon one phase of the question than upon another; some were quite ready to illustrate their theorizing with bits of verse which they had composed in the 'new versifying'.

1. Gascoigne, G., Certayne Notes of Instruction, etc. 1575, in Smith, G., op. cit., I, 49.

No two agreed upon all points; many of them were uncertain within their own mind as to the proper course to pursue. And there were those too who definitely opposed the movement. In order to understand the similarities and differences of the several writers, it would probably be of the greatest advantage to consider individually the most important of them; this we shall therefore do.

V-a

The Accentual Metrists

The Accentual Metrists

Va

We have already mentioned the position of Roger Ascham in the opposition to the use of Rime. True to his classical learning, he also declares in favor of the classics as the model which English poetry must observe, to attain its highest developments. "Therefore must we seeke in the Authors onelie of those two tongues the trewe Paterne of Eloquence, if in any other mother tonges we looke to attaine either to perfit vtterance of it in our selues or skilfull iudgement of it in others."¹ However, he does not believe in a blind application of the older forms, for he realizes that the English language is by nature different from the Latin and Greek, and consequently the variations must be taken into account. After an extended account of the Latin types of verse, he speaks of these limitations of the English, especially the overabundance of monosyllables,

1. Ascham, op. cit., I, 22.

because of which he thinks that "Carmen Exametrum doth rather trotte and hobble than runne smothly in our English tong, yet I am sure our English tong will receiue carmen Iambicum as naturallie as either Greke or Latin."¹

In the letters of Gabriel Harvey, the main occupation is with the question of adherence to the ordinary pronunciation of words, when a strict adherence to the Latin rules would necessitate a distorted accent. But he recognized the desirability first of a general agreement among poets as to the laws they should follow and in what their divergences should consist; as one of the requirements for such an agreement, a conventional and accepted English spelling is important, as we have already noticed. As an example of what he considers to be the result of a mistaken orthography, Harvey cites 'phantasie for phansie, euen for evn' and others; "have we not a thousand of the same stampe, wherein the corrupte ORTHOGRAPHY in the most hathe beene the sole, or principall, cause

1. Ibid., pp. 30-31.

of corrupte PROSODYE in ower many?"¹ And in criticizing a line of Spenser's verse, he says that in case the ordinary syllabification was not to be followed, the spelling should show as much.

Harvey is more generally concerned with upholding the idea that in versifying, one is to conform as closely as possible to the ordinary pronunciation. We can see this concern for pronunciation expressed in some of his criticism of Spenser's verses: "Insteade, of Hēauēnlī Virgīnāls you should haue written Heaūnlī Virgīnāls, and Virgnāls againe in the ninth." "You shal neuer haue my subscription or consent . . . to make your Carpēter, our Carpēter, and inche longer or bigger than God and his English people haue made him. Is there no other Pollicie to pull down Ryming and set uppe Versifying but you must needes . . . correcte Magnificat . . . against all order of Lawe, and in despite of Custome, forcibly vsurpe and tyrranize vppon a quiet companye of wordes that so far beyonde the memory of man

1. Harvey, op. cit., I, 120.
2. Ibid., p. 95.

have so peaceably enjoyed their seueral Priuiledges and Liberties." ¹ As he does not hesitate to say, "the Latine is no rule for us." ² He gives an extended list of examples of words which by no manipulation could well follow the classical rules. "Would not I laughe, thinke you, to heare MESTER IMMÉRITO come in baldely with Maiēstie, Royāltie, Honēstie, Sciēnces, Facūlties, Excēllent, Tauērnrour, Faithfully, and a thousande the like, instead of Maiēstie, Royāltie, Honēstie and so forth..?" ³ In his letter to Spenser he speaks of this matter; he mentions several instances in which Spenser distorts the accent of words by making them long though they are naturally unaccented, asking, "Durst you aduenture to make any of them long, either in Prose or in Verse?" ³ To be accurate, we must say that Harvey has substituted accentual values for quantitative ones.

Harvey does not stop with simply stating the belief that the ordinary pronunciation and accent must be observed; he goes on to consider words of

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1. Ibid, p. 117.
 2. Ibid, pp. 117-118.
 3. Ibid, pp. 117-118.

various types, and to speak of each kind separately. A few selections from his letter will possibly give a sufficient conception of his treatment. Certain words are "long in English, shorte in Latine, long in Latine, short in English. Howbeit, in my fancy such words as violently, diligently, magnicently, indifferently, seeme in a manner reasonably indifferent, and tollerable either waye."¹ "Now for Heauen, Seauen, Eleauen, or the like, I am likewise of the same opinion" of the need of respect for common usage; and therefore "we are not to goe a little farther . . . then we are licenced and authorized by the ordinarie vse, and custome, and proprietie, and Idiome, . . . which I accounte the only infallible and soueraigne Rule of Rules."²

In the face of such a statement of his position, we may ask whether Harvey's concern was actually with classical verse at all, or only with some English counterpart of it. Such a question we can perhaps answer in Harvey's own words.

1. Ibid, p. 118.
2. Ibid, p. 118.

As he realized, the Latins, in adopting their poetic forms from the Greek, did not refuse to make certain changes according to their own peculiarities. Now, of the English he presumed that so good a tongue, "cannot but have something equipollent and counteruaileable to the best Tongues in some one kind of conformitie or other."¹

If analogies and uniformities could be found in English to offer a parallel to those qualities of the Latins which could not be adopted, then it would be possible to incorporate into English poetry the other features of the classics which were readily acceptable. As for the others, "it is the vulgare and naturall Mother PROSODYE that alone worketh the feate, as the onely supreame Foundresse and Reformer of Position, Diphthong, Orthographie, or whatsoever else."²

If we remember that Harvey is concerned chiefly, not with the types of verse, but with the difficulties of applying the rules of quantity to English, his proposals must be recognized as rather reasonable, after all. The natural speech and idiom was to him

1. Ibid, p. 122.

2. Ibid, p. 121.

the necessary basis for all change to stand upon. To that point he persistently clings.

George Puttenham is closely allied with Harvey in his treatment of accent and quantity. While he enters the whole discussion, as he says, only that "we may not seeme by ignorance or ouersight to omit any point of subtiltie,"¹ and though he considered them "but vaine & superstitious obseruations, nothing at all furthering the pleasant melody of our English meeter,"² yet he enters into a rather full consideration of them. It seems clear that Puttenham had no intention of discarding rime in his metrical obseruances. He took the precaution to advise the prospective poet to be careful of choosing words in which the antepenult receives the accent, as for such words "ye shall not finde many words to match him in his termination."³ He likewise mentions that the omission of letters to aid the meter will not necessarily hinder the rime.

Because of the great number of monosyllables in the original Saxon English, Puttenham finds it impossible to observe time values in the English words, though the Norman influence had added somewhat

1. Ibid, p. 117.
 2. Ibid, p. 134.
 3. Ibid, p. 119.

to the store of polysyllables. He realizes that it would be useless to try "to egall our speach with the Greeke and Latin in their metricall observations"¹ for this reason, and also because so many of observations were determined by the 'preelection in the first Poetes'. In order to preserve the word-accents of every-day speech, he thinks that the English should employ a different method, in accordance with which the classical feet would be used, but the long quantity should always fall "where his sharbe accent falls in our owne ydionna."² Therein he would depart from the "licence of the Greekes and Latines, who made not their sharpe accent any necessary prolongation of their times". Syllables or words not accented should be governed by their position in the sentence.

To demonstrate the manner in which the accent should be determined, Puttenham discusses the proper accentuation of various words, taking specific examples. The gist of his treatment is just that one should merely follow the regular speaking accent, and in those words that are indifferent, "ye ought to allow them that time that serues your purpose and

1. Ibid, p. 123.

2. Ibid, p. 118.

pleaseth youre care most."¹

In his mention of orthography, Puttenham makes his largest concession to the Latin quantitative rules; when he advises the reader that he "would as neare as I could obserue and keepe the Greeke and Latine versifiers, that is to prolong the sillable which is written with double consonants or by diphthong or with single consonants that run hard and harshly vpon the toung, and to shorten all sillables that stand vpon vowels, if there were no cause of elision, and single consonants & such of them as are most flowing and slipper on the toung, as n, r, t, d, l; and for this purpose to take away all aspiration, and many times the last consonant of a word, as the Latine Poetes vsed to do."² Aside from this one concession, Puttenham is generally sensible in considering the nature of the English language and making that the basis of his proposals and observations.

The values of accent being substituted for those of quantity, he thinks that "as for English wordes,

1. Ibid, p. 119.
2. Ibid, pp. 119-120.

if your care be not to daintie and your rules to precise, ye neede not be without the metricall feete of the ancient Poets such as be the most pertinent and not superfluous." ¹ Upon this premise, Puttenham enters into a discussion of the adaptability of words to the various Latin meters. Some of his conclusions may be noticed, as he is one of the few who consider this phase at any length. "But of all your words bissillables the most part naturally do make the foote Iambus, many the Trocheus, fewer the Spondeus, fewest of all the Pirrichius, because in him the sharpe accent (if ye follow the rules of your accent as we haue presupposed) doth make a little oddes." ² These possibilities of meters he demonstrates by verse of his own making.

It is an interesting commentary upon Puttenham's taste to notice the change which he would have made in the Earl of Surrey's line

"What holy graue? alas, what sepulcher?" which he finds not to run smoothly, though being a perfect ten-syllable verse. To produce a smoother-running verse he thinks that an extra syllable should be introduced so as to make an eleven-syllable

1. Ibid, pp. 125-126.

2. Ibid, pp. 127-128.

trochaic verse, thus:

"What hōlie grāue? ālās, what fīt sēpūlchēr?"¹

"We say that of all your feete of three times the Dactill is most vsuall and fit for our vulgar meeter, & most agreeable to the eare, specially if ye ouerlade not your verse with too many of them, but here and there enterlace a Iambus or some other foote of two times to give him grauitie and stay."² While he accepts the dactyl, "all your other feete of three times I find no vse of them in our vulgar meeters nor no sweetenes at all, and yet words inough to serue their proportions."³ The use of the dactyl he finds to present most possibilities "of all when he is scounded vpon the stage."⁴

In Puttenham we find the most practical theorist of the whole group. While he sees the advantages that might be gained by the study of Latin obseruances, he realizes the essential differences of English and Latin which make a complete adherence entirely out of the question. The abandonment of rime is, for him, unthinkable, and would bring a distinct loss to poetry. Even if "the vse of the Greeke

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1. Ibid., p. 130.
 2. Ibid., p. 129.
 3. Ibid., p. 133.
 4. Ibid., p. 132.

and Latin feete might be brought into our vulgar poesie, and with good grace enough", he was still practical-minded enough to realize that "all maner of sodaine innouation" is "very scandalous, specially in the lawes of any language or arte."¹

We have already noted the peculiar position which Thomas Campion assumed as an opponent of rime. In the matter of adopting the Latin meters, he is ready to admit that "the Heroicall verse that is distinguisht by the Dactile hath bene oftentimes attempted in our English toong, but with passing pitifull successe; and no wonder, seeing it is an attempt altogether against the nature of our language."² He does agree, though, that the feet of two syllables are more tractable; "both the course of our monasillables make our verses vnapt to slide, and also, if we examine our polysillables, we shall finde few of them, by reason of their heauinesse, willing to serue in place of a Dactile. If we therefore reiect the Dactil as vnfit for our vse (which of necessity we are enforst to do), there remayne only the Iambick foote . and the Trochee."³

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1. Ibid, p. 117. (caption).
 2. Campion, op. cit., II, 333.
 3. Ibid, p. 333.

The iambic and the trochaic feet he finds, then, to be quite suitable for English use, though the dactyl and the spondee are not. Iambics are so natural to the English that "our owne writers vnawares hit oftentimes vpon the true Iambick numbers, but always ayme at them as far as their care without guidance of arte can attain vnto."¹ One may question the statement that poets had only 'vnawares' hit on the iambic; it may have borne a different name, or no name at all, but it was the same foot for all of that. The trochee being but an inverted iambus, it too is in accord with the language. "Then hauing these two principal kinds of verses, we may easily deriue other formes, as the Latines and Greekes before vs haue done."²

Campion does not propose to form his meters quantitatively, for "aboue all the accent of our wordes is diligently to be obserued."³ Here, however, he goes off with Puttenham into a questionable concession to the Latin rules, when he grants "no impediment except position that can alter the accent of any sillable in our English verse."⁴ He would make "euery

1. Ibid, p. 333.

2. Ibid, p. 333.

3. Ibid, p. 351.

4. Ibid, p. 352.

syllable long, whether the position happens in one or in two words, according to the manner of the Latines.¹ Perhaps Campion redeems himself from this fault when he ventures that "because our English Orthography ν differs from our common pronounciation, we must esteeme our sillables as we speake, not as we write."²

The central point of Campion's essay is ostensibly the exhibiting of eight new verse forms; they are, however, only old forms which he has re-named and for which he has concocted rules.

It is not quite clear what Campion proposes when he asks that one "consider that our verse of fiue feete, and for the most part of but ten sillables, must equall theirs of sixe feete and of many sillables."³ What he seems to be seeking is a quantitative uniformity in the reading length of the lines, his rules to this end assuming "the propriety of syllabic equivalence."⁴ It seems clear that he is trying to relate his verse to the time-values of musical composition. "For we find in

1. Ibid., p. 352.

2. Ibid., p. 352.

3. Ibid., p. 344.

4. Smith, op. cit., Intro., p. liv.

musick that oftentimes the straines of a song cannot be reduct to true number without some rests prefixt in the beginning and middle, as also at the close if need requires. Besides, our English monosyllables enforce many breathings which no doubt greatly lengthen a verse, so that it is no wonder if for this reason our English verses of five feet hold pace with the Latines of sixe.¹"

For our present purpose, then, Campion presents but little of theory which Puttenham had not treated.

1. Campion, op. cit., II, 335.

V-b

The Quantitative Metrists

The Quantitative Metrists

Vb

So far the theorists whom we have noticed have tended to a general agreement in at least one direction; the necessity for the retention of accent as the determinant of the meter, rather than of the classical quantities. Even Ascham, classicist as he was, had written in accentual hexameters; and while Harvey is generally thought of as the chief protagonist of the classical prosody, and of the hexameter especially, he too spoke against tying English poetry to an observance of quantity. Their consideration of Latin meter itself was generally subservient to their interest in the preservation in the reformed verse of the accustomed accenting of words. The group we are about to consider, however, are in another camp in this respect. Though in general they seem to be in agreement with the others, yet when occasional mention is made of the metrical construction, it will be found that some quantitative valuation of the syllables is adhered to, whatever concessions each writer may be inclined to grant to common pronunciation.

It would be a matter of great interest to us to know something definite about Archbishop Drant, whose name and whose rules of prosody find a place in the published correspondence of Harvey and Spenser. He first appears when Spenser declares to Harvey: "But once or twice you make a breache in Maister DRANTS Rules."¹ It has been supposed that Drant inclined to a strict adherence to the Latin rules of quantity, even at the expense of a resulting artificiality of pronunciation.² To this no absolute certainty can be attached, since Drant's rules are unknown; "and to saye truth . and noting I know not what breache in your gorbelyed Maisters Rules; which Rules go for good, I perceiue, and keepe a Rule where be no better in presence. Myselfe neither saw them, nor heard of them before, and therefore will neither praise them nor dispraise them nowe."³

Drant certainly had an important influence upon the group of young poets whom we learn of in these same letters as the *ἀρετῶ πᾶσι*, as they declared

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1. Spenser, *op. cit.*, I, 90.
 2. Cf., Smith, *op. cit.*, Intro. p. 1.
 3. Harvey, *op. cit.*, I, 97.

"a general surceasing and silence of balde Rymers," and "by authoritie of their whole Senate, prescribed certain Lawes and rules of Quantities of English sillables for English use."¹ We may infer from the following words of Spenser that the quantitative rules adopted by the Areopagus were essentially those of Drant: "I would hartily wish you either send me the Rules and Precepts of Arte, which you obserue in Quantities, or else followe mine, that M. Philip Sidney gave me, being the very same which M. Drant deuised, but enlarged with M. Sidney's own iudgement, and augmented with my Obseruations, that we acorde."² But however much we might like to know about the rules of Master Drant and of the Areopagus with which Spenser was associated, we must admit with Harvey that we never saw them.

It is somewhat difficult to conceive of Spenser as a wholly sincere member of the faction which sought to rid poetry of rime and to enthrone quantitative verse; his own voluminous works are enough to influence one against such an association. Yet in his letters to Harvey, we find him favoring, as we have

1. Harvey, op. cit., I, 97.
2. Ibid., p. 89.

seen, the abandonment of rime, and entering into a lengthy discussion of the matter of the new versifying, which he declares he would have adopted "long since, if I would then haue followed your councell."¹ He and Harvey are evidently in the habit of exchanging and criticizing verse of their own making in the new style, and we see in the letters some of Spenser's own attempts; one of these in 'Iambickes' "I dare warrant they be precisely perfect for the feete . and varie not one inch from the Rule."² We should like to know the rule he refers to.

Alluding to one of Harvey's experiments in the new form, Spenser says: "I like your late English hexameters so exceedingly well that I have also enured my Penne sometime in that kind: which I fynd indeed . neither so harde, nor so harshe, that it will easily and fairely yeelde it selfe to cure Moother tongue. For the onely or chiefest hardnesse which seemeth, is in the accent; whyche sometime gapeth, and, as it were, yawneith ilfauouredly, (and) seemeth like a lame Gosling that draweth

1. Ibid., p. 80.

2. Ibid., p. 80.

one legge after hir."¹ This, of course, may sound as though Spenser is making sport of the new classical verse, and it has been interpreted as such. I hardly think we should say so much as that; it is, after, all, a rather true observation upon the verse, which he still thinks may be "wonne with Custome, and rough words . subdued with Use. For why, a Gods name, may we not, as else the Greekes, haue the kingdome of oure owne Language, and measure our accents by the sounde, reseruing the Quantitie to the Verse?"² Surely one would hesitate to say that he had not a sincere interest in classical adaptation, when we see him proposing to write a book in the new style, "whyche I entitle Epithalamion Thamesis."³ At least it seems fair to assume that Spenser saw in 'this kinde' the possibility for broadening the poetic medium, if only the inherent difficulties of a difference of language could be obviated.

Richard Stanyhurst was one of the first to put into any extensive practice a kind of classical prosody; his translation of Virgil's Aeneid was in

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1. Ibid., p. 98.
 2. Ibid., p. 99.
 3. Ibid., p. 100.

what he described as 'English Heroical Verse', on the basis of which work he claimed "the maydenhed of al wurcks that hath beene before this time in print, too my knowledge, diuulged in this kind of verse."¹ While this work is the worst kind of bombast and bad poetry, and severely censured by most critics and especially Nash, Stanyhurst's rules or theories are based upon his practice in writing it. For that reason, perhaps, they are more liberal than the rules of the Areopagus.

Stanyhurst recognizes the difficulty of working in the new medium when he states that "thee ods betweene verses and rythme is very great. For, in thee one, euerye foote, euerye word, euerye syllable, yea euerye letter is too bee obserued."² He accords with the idea of Harvey in so far as he favors a liberal application of classical rules; for though certain critics will take him to task for his variations from a strict observance of those rules, theirs is the real fault. "Why should we with the stringes of thee Latin rules crampe oure tongue more than the Latins doe fetter theyre speche, as yt were wyth the chaynes of thee Greke preceptes."³

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1. Stanyhurst, R., in Smith, op. cit. I, 39.
 2. Ibid, p. 140.
 3. Ibid, pp. 141-142.

He does not resemble Harvey though, in his opinion upon the question of quantity; he favors an adherence to the Latin quantitative rules when such is possible, though not to the extent of wholesale distortion of words. If a word is "long by position, yet doubtlesse the natural dialect of English wyl not allow of that rule in middle syllables, but yt must bee of force with us excepted, where the natural pronuntiation wyl so haue yt."

"That nature wyl not permit vs too fashion oure wordes in al poinctes correspondent too thee Latinistes, may easily appeere in such termes as we borrow of theym."² To fortify his position upon this point, Stanyhurst considers in detail a long series of words; some of his rules are: that words of Latin derivation retain the Latin quantity where possible; that words receive varying accents when they are used in compounds; that the significance of a word may cause a difference in the quantitative value of its syllables; and that quantity may be changed by contraction. "For the final eende of a verse is to please the eare, which must needes bee thee vmpyre of the woord, and according too that weight oure

1. Ibid, p. 143.

2. Ibid, p. 142.

syllables must bee poysed."¹

The most individual and noteworthy matter in the Preface of Stanyhurst is his manner of spelling. One notices especially his curious use of single and double vowels. As this matter of spelling is an integral part of his prosody, and an attempt to settle the difficulties which Harvey had found to exist in 'Orthographie', we may well notice it. Beginning with "A. finita communia", he follows with a set of quantitative values for all the letters of the alphabet, stating when each is long, short, or common. From the viewpoint of his own spelling, some of the most interesting are: "E. common: yf yt bee short, I wryte yt vsually with a single E, as the, me; yf long with two, as thee, mee; although I would not wish the quantitie of syllables too depend so much vpon thee gaze of thee eye as thee censure of thee eare . . . As for M. yt is either long by position, or els clipt, yf thee next woord begyn with a vocal, .: for albeyt E bee thee last letter, that must not salue M from accurtation, because in thee eare M is thee last letter."²

Thus Stanyhurst was seeking, if unsuccessfully, a natural balance of the Latin and English prosody.

1. Ibid., p. 144.

2. Ibid., pp. 146-147.

He, too, favors the natural pronunciation to a large degree whenever it was endangered by too strict an application of classical rules; "though it may be said he went somewhat further than some of the Priscianists in his devotion to quantity."¹

William Webbe in his treatise Of English Verse gives quite a bit of discussion to the gain which a poet might make if "English Poetrie were truly reformed, and some perfect platforme or Prosodia of versifying were by them ratified and sette downe, eyther in imitation of Greekes and Latines, or where it would skant abyde the touch of theyr Rules, the like obseruati²ons selected and established by the naturall affection of the speeche." As Mr. Gregory Smith says, he has not "even the merit of respectable scholarship."³ Yet it may be well to examine his work and consider the points he makes; if he does not hesitate to discuss favorably riming poetry, he still thinks "our speeche be capable offar⁴ more learned manner of versifying as I wyl partly declare hereafter."

Webbe feels sure that if anyone will "with heedfull iudgment make tryall of the English wordes"

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1. Smith, op. cit., Intro. p. lli, and note.
 2. Webbe, op. cit., I, 229.
 3. p. lli.
 4. Webbe, op. cit., I, 268.

in the classical meters, he "shall not finde them so grosse or vnapt but that they wyll become any one of the most accustomed sortes of Latine and Greeke verses meetely."¹ As an aid to this end he discusses at length the various rules and the concessions or adjustments which must be made to accommodate the English tongue; he gives several rules which he thinks necessary. "If some exception were made against the precise obseruation of Position and certain other of the rules, then might we haue as great plenty and choyse of good wordes to furnish and sette foorth a verse as in any tongue."²

Among his precepts are these: "Indeed most of our Monasyllables I am forced to make short, to supply the want of short wordes requisite in the verses;" "The first of Polliasyllables I directed accordint to the nature of the worde, as I thought most aunswerable to Latine examples, sauing that somewhere I am constraigned to straine courtesy with the preposition of a worde compounded";⁴ "The myddle sillables, which are not very many, come for the most part vnder the precinct of Position, whereof some of

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1. Ibid, p. 279.
 2. Ibid, p. 281.
 3. Ibid, p. 282.
 4. Ibid, p. 282.

them will not possibly abide the touch, and therefore must needs be a little wrested.¹ Here Webbe shows his essential weakness. In attempting to steer between common pronunciation and quantitative rules, he is not loath to have his words 'a little wrested', thinking it "tollerable in verse to sette wordes so extra-ordinarily as other speech will not admitt . . ."² The result naturally would be artificial beyond taste, and one cannot think he would in all seriousness expect such a kind of poetry to be very attractive. The manner in which the quantitative rules would apply to an English verse is shown in the two lines which Webbe quotes thus from 'E. K.':

"All that I eate did I ioy and all that I greedily
gorged
As for those manie goodlie matters left I for
others."³

Webbe goes on to consider various kinds of classical feet and meters and the way in which they can be used for English poetry. But as there is little either new or of value in his treatment, we

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1. Ibid, p. 282.
 2. Ibid, p. 294.
 3. Ibid, p. 283.

need not consider it. It is simply a rehearsal of what, for the most part, is found in other essays, together with formidable illustrations of his own composition, one of which is a paraphrase of a portion of Spenser's "Shepherds Calender, done in what he calls 'Saphic Verse' and extended to twenty-four stanzas:

"O ye Nymphes most fine, who resort to
 this brooke,
 For to bathe there your pretty breasts
 at all times,
 Leave the watrish bowres, hyther and to
 me come at my request nowe."¹

1. Ibid., p. 287.

V-c

The Opponents

The Opponents

Vc

So far we have been dealing with men who, excepting Puttenham, have been protagonists in the movement for the adoption or an adaptation of classical laws and forms of poetry. However much they might have differed, at least they are all joined, if only superficially, upon the same side of the fight for a return to the ancients as models for their poetry. But with Puttenham we see something of the opposite stand being taken; for while he gives time to the consideration of the classical versifying, he yet considers it an idle innovation not to be put into execution, "but to be pleasantly scanned vpon, as are all nouelties so friuolous and ridiculous as it."¹

When we recall that in the letters of Spenser and Harvey, Sir Philip Sidney was associated with the Areopagus and the new poetry, we might expect that he will say a word in its favor. However, in his Apologie for Poetrie Sidney maintains a nice and completely non-partisan balance in the question.

1. Puttenham, op. cit., II, 124.

He says of them, "whether of these be the most excellent, would beare many speeches."¹ Though he treats neither at length, he exhibits the good qualities of each, saying of the 'Auncient' that it is "more fit for Musick, both words and tune obseruing quantity, and more fit lively to express diuers passions, by the low and lofty sounds of the well-weyed sillable."² To uphold the contention that English may satisfactorily use the classical models, he compares it with the facilities of other languages and finds it paramount. But farther than that Sidney does not go either in defense of or attack on the proposed reforms.

With Thomas Nash we venture among the avowed opponents of the classical movement. As usual with him, his attack is directed by personal animosities, mainly against Harvey and Stanyhurst. His criticism, though, is probably well justified. "The Hexamiter vers I graunt to be a Gentleman of an auncient house (so is many an english begger); yet this Glyme of ours he cannot thriue in. Our speech is too craggy

1. Sidney, op. cit., II, 204.

2. Ibid., p. 204.

for him to set his plough in; he goes twitching and hopping in our language like a man running vpon quagmiers, vp the hill in one Syllable, and downe the dale in another, retaining no part of that stately smooth gate which he vaunts himselfe with amongst the Greeks and Latins.¹ As a general expression of his view, we may well accept his amendment of Harvey's own statement: "Our english tongue is nothing too good, but too bad to imitate the Greeke and Latine."²

We have already seen how Samuel Daniel stood firmly in the defense of riming poetry, against the attackers; so too we must accept him as the defender of the common type of verse in the face of the classical reformers. And with it all, he is one of the most reasonable critics of the whole movement; he does not deal in exaggeration, and even admits that he can give his opponent credit for some value in certain of his theories. He assumes his position in the matter upon an irrefutable ground: "He thinkes we should not so soone yeeld our consents captiue to the authoritie of Antiquitie, vnlesse we saw more reason;

1. Nash, op. cit., II, 240.

2. Ibid., p. 240.

all our vnderstandings are not to be built by the square of Greece and Italie. We are children of nature as well as they." ¹ "For be the verse neuer so good, neuer so full, it seemes not to satisfie nor breede that delight, as when it is met and combined with a like sounding accent." ²

In criticising some of Campion's verses, Daniel points out definitely some of the faults he finds. "You cannot make this fall into the right sound of a verse--

None thinkes reward rendered worthy his worth, vnlesse you thus misplace the accent vpon Rendred and Worthis, contrary to the nature of these words: which sheweth that two feminine numbers (or Trochies, if so you wil call them) will not succede in the third and fourth place of your Verse. And so likewise in this case

Though Death doth consume, yet Vertue preserues, it wil not be a Verse, though it hath the iust sillables without the same number in the second, and the altering of the fourth place in this sorte,

Though Death doth ruine, Virtue yet preserues." ³

1. Daniel, op. cit., II, 366.
 2. Ibid, p. 362-3.
 3. Ibid, p. 378.

We may sum up Daniel's discerning criticism of the reformers' theorizing in one sentence of his own: "First, we must heere imitate the Greekes and Latines, and yet we are heere shoewed to disobey them, euen in theire owne numbers and quantities; taught to produce; make beleue to be shewd measures in that forme we haue not seene, and no such matter; told that heere is the perfect Art of versifying, which in conclusion is yet confessed to be vnperfect."¹ That would be only to "put off these fetters to recieue others"², and would be no gain at all; for what was to the Greeks and Latins the nature of their own idiom would be to the English a cramping and unnatural limitation. "Were it nor farre better to holde vs fast to our olde custome than to stand thus distracted with vncertaine Lawes?"³

If we wished to go outside the group of essayists, we might cite the satirist Hall, or Chapman, for their censure of the movement in their poetry. But it is safe for us to leave our discussion of the movement for classical prosody reforms with Daniel. He is level headed enough to see the essential upon

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1. Ibid, p. 375.
 2. Ibid, p. 364.
 3. Ibid, p. 376.

which any true poetry must rest--the "numbers best fitte the Nature of her Idiome, and the proper places destined to such accents as she will not let in to any other roomes then in those for which they were borne."¹ He was a prophet who saw most clearly; for "when after-times shall make a quest of inquirie, to examine the best of this Age, peradventure there will be found in the now contemned recordes of Ryme matter not vnfitting the grauest Diuine and seuerest Lawyer in this kingdome. But these things must haue the date of Antiquitie to make them reuerend and authentic."²

1. Ibid., p. 378.
 2. Ibid., p. 380.

VI

Conclusion

Conclusion

VI

We have now seen how the classical prosody movement fared with the critical essayist. We have seen those who agitated the abolition of rime; we have heard Daniel's able defense. We have remarked how some of the theorists, like Harvey and Puttenham, were all for modification of classical rules in favor of accent; we found others like the 'spectral' Archbishop Drant and Stanyhurst, or Webbe, holding to more or less strict quantitative evaluation of syllables. There have been various proposals of the proper Latin meters to be used or avoided, and the rules for doing either. The defense of Daniel has again stood against the onslaught of the theorizers.

We must keep in mind that behind the whole movement stood the strong humanistic tendencies of the time, as well as the Puritan attacks which stirred up self-criticism and defense among the poets. The 'classical prosody heresy' is a resultant of these forces of humanism with its classical learning, of Puritanism with its criticism of poetry, and of

contemporary poetry with its mass of truly deplorable doggerel. The shortcomings of the movement were many and were manifest even to the theorists who championed it most strongly; its impracticability is made evident by the exceedingly short life which it enjoyed--not above thirty years. It produced no poetic works of any value. What then is the result of all this theory? Did it have any tangible effects at all?

While it seems that the idea never occurred to them, these writers were busy justifying a form of poetry which they never once considered. What are Campion's five foot iambics but the blank verse which was finding such popularity upon the stage? One wonders if he had never attended a public performance of Shakespeare, for instance; how else could he venture to propose that "the Iambick verse in like manner being yet made a little more licentiate, that it thereby the nearer imitate our common talke, will excellently serue for Comedies?"¹ Or how say of Daniel when admits that his "Aduersary hath wrought this much vpon me, that I think a Tragedie would indeed best comorte with blank verse and dispence with Ryme?"²

1. Campion, op. cit., II, 336.

2. Daniel, op. cit., II, 382.

Blank verse had been in vigorous practice for over a decade; yet here they are proposing that it might serve for dramatic purposes!

What these theorists actually were doing was to clear the way for a recognition of the merits of blank verse on the side of theory, as well as of practice. Campion fights for the abolishment of rime; though he is extreme, he nevertheless is establishing as a poetic fact the non-essentiality of that poetic convention. When Harvey proposes that the classical verse forms be modified to permit of an accentual meter, he is defending the propriety of metrical verse without rime. In the matter of theory, could we ask any better justification of blank verse than that which is implicit in the arguments for freedom from rime and a regular accentual meter, such as many of these writers present?

To be sure, even these theorists were not able to recognize always the form which they were--if unconsciously--busy justifying. The stumbling block seems to have been the Earl of Surrey's original experiment in blank verse in his translation of a part of Virgil. Of him Ascham says that he "by good iudgement auoyded the fault of Ryming, yet (had not) fullie hitte perfite and trew versifying. In deed,

they obserue just number, and euen feete; but here is the fault, that their feete be feete without ioyntes, that is to say, not distinct by trew quantity of sillables."¹ Perhaps he failed to recognize the part which the accent played in the new form.

Less excusable is the error of Webbe in judging Surrey's poetry; he says that it is 'Hexametrum Epicum', and that "the first that attempted to practice this verse should seeme to be the Earle of Surry, who translated some part of Virgill into verse indeede, but without regard of true quantity of sillables."²

What more shall we ask of our reformers? That they were absurdly fantastic in many of their proposals we cannot deny; are we less so to-day? We should be loath to censure them for not recognizing the very poetic form which they were unwittingly working for; how could they have foreseen it? Another tide of revolt and reform had spent itself and flowed back into oblivion, leaving its pittance of jetsam on our poetic shores. Many another has left us even less.

1. Ascham, op. cit., II, pp. 32.
2. Webbe, op. cit., I, 283.

"The inevitable extremes are merely insurgency's
alms for oblivion."¹ "But this is but a Character
of that perpetuall reuolution which wee see to be
in all things that neuer remaine the same; and we
must heerein be content to submit our selues to the
law of time, which in few yeres wil make al that for
which we now contend Nothing."²

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1. Lowes, J. L., Convention and Revolt in Poetry.
1919, p. 144.
 2. Daniel, op. cit., II, 384.

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